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Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "febB1993" (1993). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. Paper 1252.
http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/rk_manuscripts/1252

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Bard

THE HEIFER

Let the chosen animal make
her way into the shrine room
stepping over the gilded heaps
of last year's heifer's dung

even the horseflies on it are golden.
It is the way. Men follow
to see her tracks made in the dust
kept yearlong undisturbed.

Except for what the wind does.
Worship her. She moves
and that is all we need to know.
Follow her. She disappears

in the dazzling radiance
of the butter lamps far ahead.
Follow her there too
into the annihilating light.

9 February 1993

THE DRYNESS OF THE LEAF

for Charlotte

opens, the leaf opens
close to the eye
the chambers of its intimate differences

no two alike
seems Nature's never-ending praise of
Mind that made it so

makes it so,
the elegant differences
held to the eye

or look in a friend's eye
till you see past reflection
of your own enquiring

(is that what a friend
looks like,
your own face looks back at you?)

and see the household
of his difference
the colors o Mind the colors!

9 February 1993

STELLAM APUD MORTLAKE INCARNATAM

[An interaction between Dr John Dee and the Female Spirit who calls herself Madimi. See Casaubon's folio and Wolosoff's opera.]

This stone
for your Wise
in testi-
mony
there are so many, Madimi, stars
why worship *you* of them?

À cause de la vie privée
I am here with you,
so worship
what is at hand.
I'm the only star that ever slipped a generous hand
around your thick'ning waist
o dullard scholar of a meta-man!

Because of ordinary human life
of days and beds and interviews conducted
and all the flashing steel of governance
and the tottering brick chimney stacks atop your house,
above your cheapjack carpentry,

and into this miasm of too much hope and too much fear
I, the little one, least lover, am
come down from the vast steppes of the winter stars
to keep you comfort and to compel
your errant imagery to attend the Work,
lila, our child's play you knot-browed bend to learn.

Because I am here with you
I am kinder than any God by far.

And Dee, so answered, turned him back
to some swart book
in one page of which he scritch'd

with a chip of coal
and a star is made flesh in Mortlake—

I have seen it with my own eyes
scribbled in the margin of his endless text.

10 February 1993

DU LIVRE D'HENOCH

L'ange égaré
bêlé dans la nuit

seulement le bois
le sent, bruit

de lait et de sueur.

le 10 février 1993

for Charlotte

The long sleek negotiation
stretches the highway. Evening arrives
insolent as ever, a killjoy nanny
putting the gauds of light away. Little
do we know as we are how later
she will be the goddess of this place
(dark makes of time a solid chamber,
camera of the most close, footstool, fetter)
and vamp us with wisdom's purple yieldings
until we finally get the point of it
and spill it into bird-trafficking dawn.

11 February 1993

These things remain
possible
blue lights of Protestant Christmas trees
salvoes of wooden warships
booming over the Yellow Sea

and intolerant journalists
and academicians who

ah who
take out in palaver what they crave:
the right to hold opinions before the young

when all they offer of a truth
is this book or that
saved from time's limepit

they have the courtesy to preserve
just barely
to give them leave in children's ears to pour
great Cthulhu meeping in the drivel tone

whereas all we have is this word I put in your hands.

11 February 1993

NEW HAMPSHIRE 1940

In the wishing water a kind of current
in the little fake log cabin restaurant
smelled of maple sugar too warm my fingers
wanted outside the glittering pool

the wishing well with dimes and nickels
in among the pennies US and Canadian
I wanted not the money but the wishes
not what they got but the magic wishing

I wanted water.

11 February 1993

steel horseflies develop into gold bees

as in a muddy France once
the golden toads of Clovis turned
by natural erosion of the form
into three golden lilies

their petals folded back
to take the mist inside themselves
in that rustless splendor of their chalices
flowers, flowers from the sky

so these horseflies of the Barberinis
transmewed in the natural alchemy of dream
till one woke in his nouveau palazzo
exclaiming to his sleeping wife, Bees,

they are bees, and always have been
and the steel was silver that now is gold
and the whole sky is ours
and everything a man shall ever see

belongs to him by dint of wanting it!
All we have to do is put it on our flag
and our flag on the highest steeple
and the steeple fits snug in the sky—

wake up! We drown in honey!

11 February 1993
for Frederick Hammond

THE STRANGE HARVEST

for Charlotte

Too many old movies
a bunch of kale on the kitchen table
and who am I?

Winter is my religion but what is my name?

I will chop the tough stems off
and discard them without recycling anxiety
I will cook the resilient leaves
a long time with a little piece of meat
maybe, to make it mediaeval
(substance honored for its accidents)
and some hot red pepper. But no salt,

I am island enough thank you, and set it
down before my one beloved saying Here
this is the only moment that there is,

this one between us now, eat this with me
or leave it on your plate, it is we who grow
firm in the middle of ocean.

12 February 1993

THE TRIADS

for Charlotte

Things disappear. A suite
of music from *Don Juan* by Mozart.
And then they dare

to play a flute concerto by Herr Quantz.
Measures measuring nothing,
roads going

not at all.
These are the triads of Britain
beginning,

this is the wood and this is the island
to which we come
again and again when Troy burns down,

middleweight masochistic joggers
springing dog-wise into the trees
and this is the flute

to which they dance
this modern sense
of owing something to yourself

the world is coaxed to bring
by acts of self-destructive reverie
on roads. In rain.

With pain
we live again.
I have no evidence

except as much as Taliesin did
leaf-mold and lizard bones
slipping through my nerveless fingers

to say it all again
what has never been spoken
from the first star-fall on this world till now,

this burning argument
love used to coerce our lingering
unsheltered on the appalling slopes.

A flute has nothing much to say
except this little thing:
when I speak they have to listen.

2.

The music is not bad
except as music is.
Filling the space of time we know

we have so far to go
to find the core or crisis of the forest
that stretches without interruption

to the bleak matinees of the mountains,
the proprieties
from which we were escaping

are there before us. The chapel
full of horses, the horse
with no eyes, the snake skeleton

forming a figure eight on the paving stone
there at the crossing of the nave
where lovers stand to swear their futures
twisting and untwisting
this meek infinity
we give each other with our yesses.

The chapel.
In this forbidden information
everything you'll ever need

stands before you masked as your dream.
You think it's night.
You think you're sleeping.

3.

Troy town
the towers
spill their shadows

town their spirals
writhe through the dry earth
shadow of water

in a dream of fire
Maeander Scamander the river
turning,

Troy town came here
in our heads the language
twisted round,

the adjective before the noun,
the verb before the subject
whispering in forest logic

the glade
where languages are made,
the town

which is made of hunger.
And hunger built a house
of many streets

and sent its young men
out to sell their time its young
women out to sell their future,

and in the turning
the street too turns round
and bites the house,

the house falls down
around its man
and then the child again

is a citizen of trees.
In Corbenic a shadow writhes
in the fire light of burning Troy.

In Michigan a fall of snow
hides the first wound.
Under his slow footsteps

(the leg is mending now,
the dog companionable
in shabby woodlots near the highway)

you hear the shield clangor,
the earth-word spoken
beneath the hasty laws.

[12 February 1993]

PARIS, IN THE MOROCCAN CAFE

He tea
brews for
Hebrews or
Maghrebis
both or neither
me even
a piss-
pure stream
sterile from boiling
pea-
cocked necked kettles

and now eftsoons he pours
spurtwise
from on high
in copper cups.
Newspapers rattle
tidings of this nowhere now
be it done to us
according to these words
the more the media.

And some drink glass.
Absterge this shitty table
stuck with jam
plum medlar lingon
jarred in Helsingfors
and lamb
buttery with lemon
for south
wind days, ways
for the leaping
love of Nike

who leaps
towards us all
all ways
from the wall

over the stairs
she flies
into the city!

and what better
could a world do
than take
the shadow
for the substance

this aroma
for salutary meat

Nike
whose wingless astragals
float her
 morning mist
around the dug-up Louvre,
Afrique in the palms of her feet

so fast she
soft skin tickle drink tea dunk bread
untoasted spurious news
unhinges whole Portugals
of simpering exiles

I feel something warm
between my hands
I think is this.

13 February 1993

[The notes which form the original of this were scribbled on a yellow pad legal sheet datelined Amtrak, 19 September 1988. It was inscribed to P.J. = Pierre Joris with whom I had drunk such tea and swallowed such mechoui in Paris. Who knows if I transcribed these notes before, and made some other saying from them of which this is now a meek ragout? May whoever gave it to me in the first place forgive me for saying it twice.]

FROM THE RIG-VEDA

a Valentine for Charlotte

A bull with a thousand horns
Has risen from the sea—
With the help of this mighty one
I'll make all the people sleep.

Wives will slumber in their beds
On verandas, and in dim bedrooms
Women with intimate fragrances
I'll make fall fast asleep,

Her mother will sleep, her father
Will sleep and the dog will sleep,
Servants and relatives all asleep
When I come to my darling in the dark.

People walk with their eyes closed
The watchman dreams he's wide awake,
I make the whole world fast asleep
When I come to my darling in the dark.

13 February 1993

[Set from verses translated into German by Herman Lommel in his essay "Die Liebe in vedischer Dichtung," in *Paideuma*, Vol.3, No.3-5, October 1948. I suspect Lommel's version is already romanticized, but St. Valentine's Day comes only once a year.]

4.

The smell of our roses
answers the deep places
where the words began,

Nodens lives there
his head asleep in sea wrack
his body wide awake

until the ocean sleeps
the smell of any flowers
understands us

like chalk cliffs gleaming
just after rain
when the sun has set

beyond the valley
and the last baking
is finished and the bread

is cold and the tables
not even the flies
expect anything from the tables

and the roses
we know
know us

this recent flower
of our scarlet
attentions

how many societies
exiles revolutions
it took to make a rose

no simple song
these cultivars
these Persian messages.

So sea
in our heads
and roses on the table

I hope you live with
me forever
isn't that what the birds

those fidelities
insist on every morning
to remind?

Crow in a tree
we do not know
what anything is saying,

we make it up
listen,
Taliesin is just listening

until each thing
confesses
its secret name

known before now
only to the wind,
tree semaphore

thorn anthems golden cosseted
dusty pronged evangelists
shouting pollen pollen in the night.

[13 February 1993]

N I E

1.
Last year my
unaware

A thousand emptiness
restless loving

motion
continue
a self

comprehensible

2.
But now
before dooms
a tune
tumescant
within

3.
like a rutabaga
gazing
unknowing

filled with knees

4.
Hair apart
just as you are

a mountain

5.
structures that begin

as the tide
hard-bodied to prove

6.
Someone else's quiet
against my ear

my lips
had become mine

7.
sun certain you'll find it
to call
one celebrates
stars
turn around
filled with mind

8.
spittle
dry and powdery
a faculty
its own incompetence
inkling
of a year

9.
sultry fluids
swelled
no room until
you replaced the lingering

fingers among my breath

10.
gut city grit gut
and other viscera

rearranged
between distended smiles

this body hopes lights
into my drugged peace

11.
titanium orgasm
your funny hunger
fork never felt

12.
crystal prospers
your inexorable fabric

lesser folk fear dream

dream ahead
down azure us

13.
the air is nothing else

14.
world of others
stay with me

an unkept life
flowers

white burns white yours

15.
parking lot
not dreaming

woman

beckoning form

is the summer clean?

16.
each has some
within time
that like me you hate
willing gravel underfoot
even the tiniest enough

17.
lives we have eaten
behind painted hands.

[Cast into order this **13th February 1993** from scannings of a book called *Annie* by Leon J. Rosenberg, sent to me a couple of seasons back from the Equity Press, Bethesda, Maryland. The words that are here were all there, and in the same order. I have felt a curious obligation thus to make my sense of a love poem from what Rosenberg so plainly, barely, baldly, naively, faux-naively, yearningly meant as a love poem. I suppose us both to be fools. This sifting of his bookstaves is for Charlotte.]

CROW IN A TREE

We keep talking about the here and now
whereas we are
what the here and now has to say for itself.

We should be talking about
the rest of it. The other
and the mother of it,

the other place,
where the crow
comes from to sit here over our snow.

13 February 1993

EON ROSE

1.
Last year
unaware

thousand emptiness
restless to
continue
a self

2.
Now
before dooms
a tune
tumescent
within

3.
Hair apart
just as you are

4.
structures that begin
as the tide
hard-bodied to prove

5.
Someone else's quiet
against my ear

my lips
become mine

6.
call

to celebrate

stars
turn around
filled with mind

7.
spittle
dry faculty
its own incompetence
of year

8.
sultry fluids
swelled
no room until
you replaced the lingering
fingers among my breath

9.
body hopes light
into drugged peace

10..
titanium orgasm
your funny hunger
fork never felt

11.
crystal prospers
your inexorable fabric

lesser folk fear dream

12.

the air is nothing else

13.
world of others
stay with me

an unkept life
flowers

white burns white yours

15.
lives we have eaten
behind painted hands.

13 February 1993